

THE
COMICAL HISTORY
OF THE
KING AND THE COBBLER;

CONTAINING

The Entertaining and Merry Tricks, and Droll Frolics, played by the Cobbler.—How he got acquainted with the King, became a great man, and lived at Court ever after.



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COMICAL HISTORY

OF THE

KING AND THE COBBLER.

How King Henry VIII, used to visit the watches in the city, and how he became acquainted with a merry jovial Cobbler.

It was the custom of King Henry the Eight, to walk late in the night into the city disguised, to observe and take notice how the constables and watch performed their duty, not only in guarding the city gates, but also in diligently watching the inner parts of the city, that so they might, in a great measure, prevent those disturbances and casualties which too often happen in great and populous cities in the night ; and this he did oftentimes, without the least discovery who he was, returning home to Whitehall early in the morning.

Now, on his return home through the Strand, he took notice of a certain cobbler who was constantly up at work, whistling and singing every

morning. The king was resolved to see him, and be acquainted with him, in order to which he immediately knocks the heel of his shoe by hitting it against a stone, and having so done, he bounced at the cobbler's stall.

Who's there? cries the cobbler.

Here's one, cries the king. With that the cobbler opened the stall door, and the king asked him if he could put the heel on his shoe.

Yes, that I can, says the cobbler: come in, honest fellow, and sit thee down by me, and I will do it for thee straight, the cobbler scraping his awls and old shoes to one side to make room for the king to sit down.

The king being hardly able to forbear laughing at the kindness of the cobbler, asked him if there was not a house hard by that sold a cup of ale, and the people up?

Yes said the cobbler, there is an inn over the way, where I believe the folks are up, for the carriers go from thence very early in the morning

With that the king borrowed an old shoe of the cobbler, and went over to the inn, desired the

cobbler would bring his shoe to him thither as soon as he had put on the heel again. The cobbler promised he would; so making what haste he could to put on the heel, he carries it over to the king, saying, honest blade, here is thy shoe again, and I warrant thee it will not come off in such haste again.

Very well, says the king, what must you have for your pains?

A couple of pence, replied the cobbler.

Well, said the king, seeing thou art an honest merry fellow, there is a tester for thee; come, sit down by me, I will drink a full pot with thee; come, here's a good health to the king.

With all my heart, said the cobbler, I'll pledge thee were it in water.

So the cobbler sat down by the king and was very merry, and drank off his liquor very freely; he likewise sung some of his merry songs and catches, whereat the king laughed heartily, and was very jocund and pleasant with the cobbler, telling him withal that his name was Harry Tudor, that he belonged to the court, and that if he

would come and see him there, he would make him very welcome, because he was a merry companion, and charged him not to forget his name, and to ask any one for him about the court, and they would soon bring him to him ; for, said the king, I am very well known there.

Now the cobbler little dreamt that he was the king that spake to him, much less that the king's name was Harry Tudor. Therefore, with a great deal of confidence, he stands up and puts off his hat, makes two or three scrapes with his foot, and gives the king many thanks, also telling him that he was one of the most honest fellows he ever met with in all his life time, and although he never had been at court, yet he should not be long before he would make a holyday to come and see him.

Whereupon the king, paying for what they had drunk, would have taken his leave of the cobbler ; but he, not being willing to part with him, took hold of his hand, and said, by my faith you must not go, you shall not go, you shall first go and see my poor habitation, I have there a tub of good brown ale that was never tapped yet, and you must go and taste it, for you are the most honest blade I ever met withal, and I

love an honest merry companion with all my heart.

CHAP. II.

How the Cobbler entertained the King in his cellar, and of the disturbance they had like to have had by his wife Joan.

So the cobbler took the king with him over the way, where he had his cellar adjoining the stall, which was handsomely and neatly furnished for a man of his profession. Into the cellar he took the king; there, said he, sit down, you are welcome; but I must desire you to speak softly, for fear of waking my wife Joan, who lies hard by, (shewing the king a close bed made neatly up at one corner of the cellar, much like a closet,) for if she should wake she will make our ears ring again.

At which speech of the cobbler's the king laughed, and told him he would be mindful and follow his directions.

Whereupon the cobbler kindled up a fire, and

fetched out a brown loaf, from which he cut a lusty toast, which he sat baking at the fire ; then he brought out his Cheshire cheese. Now, says he, there is as much fellowship in eating as in drinking.

Which made the king admire the honest freedom of the cobbler. So having eaten a bit the cobbler began. A health to all true hearts and merry companions ; at which the king smiled, saying, friend I'll pledge thee.

In this manner they ate and drank together till it was almost break of day ; the cobbler being very free with his liquor, and delighting the king with several of his old stories, insomuch that he was highly pleased with the manner of his entertainment ; when, on a sudden, the cobbler's wife Joan began to awake. I'faith, says the cobbler, you must begone, my wife Joan begins to grumble, she'll awake presently, and I would not for half the shoes in my shop she should find you here.

Then taking the king by the hand, he led him up the stairs, saying, farewell honest friend, it shan't be long before I make a holyday to come and see thee at court.

Thou shalt be kindly welcome, replied the king.

So they parted the king on his way to Whitehall, and the cobbler to his cellar, and there putting all things to rights before his wife Joan got up, he went to work again, whistling and singing as merry as he used to be, being much satisfied that he happened on so good and jovial a companion, still pleasing himself in his thoughts how merry he should be when he came to court.

CHAP. III.

How the Cobbler prepared himself to go to court, and how he was set out in the best manner by his wife Joan.

Now as soon as the king came home, he sent out orders about the court, that if any one enquired for him by the name of Harry Tudor, they should immediately bring him before him, whatever he was, without any further examination.

The cobbler thought every day a month till

he had been at court to see his new acquaintance, and was troubled how he should get leave of his wife Joan, for he could not get without her knowledge, by reason he did resolve to make himself as fine as he could, for his wife always kept the keys of his holyday clothes; whereupon one evening, as they sat at supper finding her in a very good humour, he began to lay open his mind to her, telling her the whole story of their acquaintance, repeating it over and over again, that he was the most honest fellow that ever he met withal. Husband, quoth she, because you have been so ingenious as to tell me the whole truth, I will give you leave to make a holyday, for this once you shall go to court, and I will make you as fine as I can.

So it was agreed that he should go to court the next day; whereupon Joan rose betime the next morning to brush up her husband's holyday clothes, and made him as fine as she could. She washed and ironed the lace-band, and made his shoes shine that he might see his face in them; having done this she made her husband rise and pull of his shirt. Then she washed him with warm water from head to foot, putting on him a clean shirt; afterwards she dressed him in his holyday clothes, pinning his laced band in prim.

CHAP. IV.

The Cobbler's reception at court, with the manner of his behaviour before the King.

The Cobbler being thus set forth, he strutted through the street like a crow in a gutter, thinking himself as fine as the best of them all.

In this manner he came to the court, staring on this body and that body as he walked up and down, and not knowing how to ask for Harry Tudor. At last he espied one, as he thought, in the habit of a servant-man, to whom he made his address, saying.

Dost thou hear, honest fellow, do you know one Harry Tudor who belongs to the court.

Yes, said the man, follow me, and I will bring you to him.

With that he had him presently up into the guard chamber, telling one of the yeomen of the guard there was one that enquired for Harry Tudor.

The yeoman replied ; I know him very well , if you please to go along with me, I'll bring you to him immediately,

So the cobbler followed the yeoman, admiring very much the prodigious finery of the rooms which he carried him through. He thought within himself, that the yeoman was mistaken in the person whom he inquired for ; for, said he, he whom I look for is a plain, merry, honest fellow, his name is Harry Tudor ; we drank two pots together not long since. I suppose he may belong to some lord or other about the court.

I tell you, friend, replied the yeoman, I know him very well, do you but follow me, and I shall bring you to him instanly.

So going forward, he came into the room where the king was accompanied by several of his nobles, who attended him.

As soon as the yeoman had put up by the arras, he spoke aloud, may it please your Majesty, here is one that inquires for Harry Tudor.

The cobbler hearing this, thought he had committed no less than treason : therefore he up with

his heels and ran for it : but not being acquainted with the several turning and rooms through which he came, he was soon overtaken and brought before the king, whom the cobbler little thought to be the person he inquired after, therefore in a trembling condition, he fell down on his knees, saying.

May it please your Grace, may it please your Highness, I am a poor cobbler, who inquired for one Harry Tudor, who is a very honest fellow, I mended the heel of his shoe not long since, and for which he paid me nobly, and gave me two pots to boot : but I had him afterwards to my cellar, where we drank part of a cup of nappy ale, and were very merry, till my wife Joan began to grumble which put an end to our merriment, for that time. but I told him I would come to the court and see him, as soon as conveniently I could.

Well, said the king, don't be troubled, would you know this honest fellow again, if you could see him.

The cobbler replied, Yes, that I will among a thousand.

Then said the king, stand up, and be not

afraid, but look well about you, peradventure you may find the fellow in this company.

Whereupon the cobbler arose, and looked wishfully upon the king and the rest of the nobles, but it was to little or no purpose: for though he saw something in the king's face which he thought he had seen before, yet he could not be Harry Tudor, the heel of whose shoe he had mended, and who had been so merry a companion with him at the inn, and at his own cellar.

He therefore told the king he did not expect to find Harry Tudor among such fine folks as he saw there, but that the person he looked for was a plain honest fellow. Adding withal, that he was sure that did Harry Tudor but know he was come to court, he would make him very welcome: for, says the cobbler, when we parted he charged me to come to court soon and see him, which I promised I would, and accordingly I have made a holyday on purpose to have a glass with him.

At which speech of the cobbler's the king had much ado to forbear laughing out, but keeping his countenance as steady as he could before the cobbler, he spoke to the yeoman of the guard.

Here, said he, take this honest cobbler down into my cellar, and let him drink my health : and I will give orders that Harry Tudor shall come to him presently.

So away they went, the cobbler being fit to leap out of his skin for joy, not only that he had come off so well, but that he should see his friend Harry Tudor.

CHAP. V.

The Cobbler's entertainment in the King's Cellar.

The cobbler had not been long in the king's cellar, before the king came to him in the same habit that he had on when the cobbler mended his shoe ; whereupon the cobbler knew him immediately, and ran and kissed him, saying, honest Harry, I have made an holyday on purpose to see you, but I had much ado to get leave of my wife Joan, who was loath to loose so much time from my work ; but I was resolved to see you, and therefore I made myself as fine as I could. But I'll tell thee, Harry, when I came to court

I was in a peck of troubles how to find you out ; but at last I met with a man who told me he knew you very well, and that he would bring me to you, but instead of doing so, he brought me before the king which almost frightened me out of my seven senses ; but faith I'm resolved to be merry with you now, since I have met you at last.

Aye, that we shall replied the king, we shall be as merry as princes.

Now after the cobbler had drunk about four or five good healths, he began to be merry, and fell a-singing his old songs and catches, which pleased the king very much, and made him laugh heartily.

When on a sudden several of the nobles came into the cellar, extraordinary rich in apparel, and all stood uncovered before Harry Tudor, which put the cobbler into a great amazement at first, but presently recovering himself, he looked more wishfully upon Harry Tudor, and soon knowing him to be the king, whom he saw in his presence chamber, though in another habit, he immediately fell upon his knees saying.

May it please your Grace, may it please your

Highness, I am a poer honest cobbler and mean no harm.

No, no, said the king, nor shall receive any here, I assure you.

He commanded him therefore to rise, and be as merry as he was before; and though he knew him to be the king, yet he should use the same freedom with him as he did before, when he mended the heel of his shoe.

This kind speech of the king's and three or four glasses of wine, made the cobbler be in as good humour as before, telling the king several of his old stories and singing some of his best songs, very much to the satisfaction of the king and all his nobles.

THE
COBBLER'S SONG
 IN THE
 KING'S CELLAR.

Come let us drink the other pot,
 our sorrows to confound;

We'll laugh and sing before the King.
 so let his health go round ;
 For I am as bold as bold can be,
 no cobbler e'er was ruder ;
 Then here good fellow here's to thee,
 (remembering Harry Tudor.)

When I'm at work within my stall,
 upon him I will think ;
 His kindness I to mind will call,
 whene'er I eat or drink ;
 His kindness was to me so great,
 the like was never known,
 His kindness I shall still repeat,
 and so shall my wife Joan.

I'll laugh when I sit in my stall,
 and merrily will sing.
 That I with my poor last and awl,
 am fellow with the king.
 But it is more I must confess,
 than I at first did know,
 But Harry Tudor ne'ertheless,
 resolves it shall be so.

And now farewell unto Whitehall,
 I homeward must retire,

To sing and whistle in my stall,
 my Joan will me desire :
 I do but think how she shall laugh,
 when she hears of this thing,
 That he that drank her nut-brown ale,
 Was England's Royal King.

CHAP. VI.

How the Cobbler became a Courtier.

Now the king considering the pleasant humour of the cobbler, how innocently merry he was, and free from any design ; that he was a person that laboured very hard, and took a great deal of pains for a small livelihood, was pleased, out of his princely grace and favour, to allow him a liberal annuity of forty merks a year, for the better support of his jolly humour, and the maintenance of his wife Joan : and that he should be admitted one of his courtiers, and that he might have the freedom of his cellar whenever he pleased.

Which being so much beyond expectation, did highly exalt the cobbler's humour, much to the satisfaction of the king.

So after a great many legs and scrapes, he returned home to his wife Joan, with the joyful news of his reception at court; which so well pleased her, that she did not think much at the great pains she took in decking him for the journey.

ANECDOTE.

When Charles II was on a progress through his dominions, he was waited upon by the magistracy of a certain city in the north of England. The Mayor had prepared with no little study a splendid oration for so memorable an occasion. Kneeling down to deliver his address the worthy Magistrate (who was excessively fat) commenced by a *feu de joy* of rather a singular nature: whether he deemed an expression of loyalty tantamount to a royal salute of the present day, history is silent: certain it is, he felt greatly embarrassed, and blundered his oration most woe-fully. “I have, please your Majesty, begun at the wrong end,” cried the good Mayor, endeavouring to apologize for the incoherency of his speech. “So I remarked,” replied the facetious monarch, “but I fear the mistake can’t now be corrected:—Rise up, Sir Walter Cannon.”

THE TWO BEARS.

Two very intimate friends, one a painter, the other a goldsmith, travelling together, were benighted near a convent of religious christians, where they were entertained with great humanity. As those travellers wanted money to continue their journey, the painter, who was a proficient in his art, offered to work for the monastery. He soon possessed his hosts with a high opinion of his talents, and even inspired them with a confidence, which they had soon too much reason to repent.

The monks having one night left the sacristy of their church open, the painter and his friend the goldsmith went in ; and, after taking out all the vessels of gold and silver which they found there, they ran away as fast as possible. Possessed of so great a booty, they determined to return to their own country. When they arrived there, fearing lest the robbery should be discovered, they put all their riches into a chest, and made an agreement that neither should take any out, without informing the other.

Soon after the goldsmith married, and became the father of two children. To supply his expences, which increased with his family, he appropriated the greatest part of the treasure in the

chest to his own use. The painter perceived his treachery, and reproached him with it. The other absolutely denied the fact.

The painter, provoked at his perfidy, determined to punish him for it; but, to be more certain of his revenge, he pretended to believe every thing his associate swore. With this view he applied to a huntsman, a friend of his, to procure him two young bears alive. When he had them in his possession, he ordered a wooden statue to be made so much resembling the goldsmith in every respect, that the eye was deceived. After having thus prepared every thing necessary to his design, he accustomed the bears to eat out of the hands of the statue. He led them every morning into the room where he kept it; and, as soon as they saw it, they always ran and eat the victuals, which had been put in its hands.

The painter employed many weeks in teaching them this exercise every day. As soon as he saw the two bears were perfect in their parts, he invited the goldsmith and his two children to supper. The feast being prolonged till midnight, the goldsmith and his two children lay at their host's. At day-break the painter dexterously conveyed away the two children, and in their place substituted the two bears.

How much was the father, on waking, sur-

prised to find them in his room instead of his children! He cried out most dreadfully. The painter ran to him, and appeared greatly astonished: "Perhaps," said he, "you have deserved so great a punishment as this metamorphosis from heaven, for some very extraordinary crime." The goldsmith was not to be deceived by what his friend said; but being convinced that he was the author of the metamorphosis, he obliged him to appear before the *cadi*; and there accused him of having stolen his children. "My lord," said the painter, "It is very easy for you to know the truth; order the two bears to be brought here; and if, by their gestures and caresses, they distinguish the goldsmith from the rest of the company, you cannot doubt their being really his children."

The *cadi* consented to make this trial. As soon as the two little bears, whom the painter had made to fast two days before, saw the goldsmith, they ran to him, and licked his hands. So extraordinary a sight astonished the *cadi*, who was so embarrassed that he durst not pronounce sentence.

The goldsmith confused, returned to the painter, and on his knees confessed his treachery, conjuring him to pray to God to restore his children to their natural form. The painter pretending

to be affected with what he said, passed the night with him in prayers. He had before taken away the two bears, and in their place conveyed the two children, whom he had hid till then. The painter conducted their father into the room where they were; and returning them to him, said, "God has heard my feeble prayers, learn from this time to keep strictly to your engagements."



